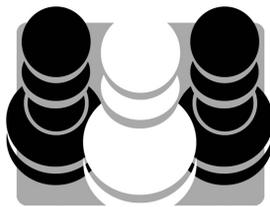


Chess Classics

Python Strategy

By

Tigran Petrosian



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Contents

Biographical Data & Key to symbols used	4
Editor's Foreword <i>by Oleg Stetsko</i>	5
Compiler's Foreword <i>by Eduard Shekhtman</i>	6
The Logic of Talent <i>by Nikolai Krogius</i>	7
The Man I Knew <i>by Svetozar Gligoric</i>	10
A Journey Across the Street <i>by Nikolai Tarasov</i>	14
Selected Games	
1 1945-1948	21
2 1949-1951	31
3 1952-1953	51
4 1954-1956	68
5 1957-1958	92
6 1959-1960	117
7 1961-1962	148
8 1963	166
9 1964-1965	196
10 1966	207
11 1967-1968	231
12 1969	241
13 1970-1972	272
14 1973-1974	314
15 1975-1978	327
16 1979-1982	350
Appendix – Under the Microscope of the Computer <i>by Karsten Mueller</i>	369
Game Index	381
Name Index	384
Index of Openings	387
Petrosian's Tournament and Match Results	388

Compiler's Foreword

In December 1983 Tigran Petrosian finally decided to write a book. He agreed to do so when urged by Viktor Chepizhnoi, the chess director of the “Physical Culture and Sport” publishing house. Chepizhnoi's arguments were convincing, but the Champion already understood perfectly well that the moment had come: he had already collected and classified practically all the games he had ever played (they came to around two thousand). For roughly a quarter of them, annotations had been written, albeit in a compressed (“Informator”-style) arrangement.

For this book Petrosian wanted to annotate roughly 30-40 more games; together with those published earlier, these would constitute the nucleus of the work. But his life took a different turn. Tigran Vartanovich had been feeling unwell for some time. His play was off form, his games showed some strange kinds of errors, some inexplicable blunders. An examination showed that he was incurably ill. His robust frame endured two operations and he returned home. New plans, the desire to play, to write, to work... Up until his final moments he didn't realize he was dying. Word came through that Petrosian had been admitted to the Interzonal Tournament. He asked his wife Rona Yakovlevna to find out where and when it was going to be. He was already back in hospital, his strength was giving out, but he refused to believe he would not get up again.

On Monday 13 August 1984, the ninth World Champion breathed his last.

The book that Tigran Vartanovich would have written might well have been quite different from the one before you. I merely know that he did not want to alter anything in his old annotations, which reflect the spirit of their time. He wished for chronology to be strictly observed...

From the most varied sources it was possible to collect an extensive amount of material, the majority of it written by Petrosian himself. A number of games are annotated by his closest assistants Isaak Boleslavsky and Igor Zaitsev, and also by some other Grandmasters. In what follows, all games are annotated by Petrosian unless otherwise stated at the start of the game.

As a rule, Petrosian's annotations were written “hot on the heels” of the games – for bulletins, special issues, magazines. In preparing this book he didn't want to adapt them to a present-day format. Hence expressions like “the investigations of the past few years” must be taken as relating to the time when the game in question was played. In some cases where the notes to games were incomplete, the compiler or editor introduced some minor corrections, additions or alterations.

The introductory articles were written by people closely acquainted with Petrosian. Grandmasters Nikolai Krogius and Svetozar Gligoric spent many pleasant hours with Tigran Vartanovich; they took part in many chess battles together with him. Nikolai Tarasov was linked to Petrosian by long years of friendship. They both put much effort and energy into reviving the publication of a chess weekly. The first issue of *64* appeared in 1968. Petrosian became its first editor, and Tarasov, a journalist by profession, took charge of the young editorial team.

I am sincerely indebted to Rona Yakovlevna Petrosian, who greatly helped in the collecting of material for this book. I hope this account of the ninth World Champion's contribution to chess will make for interesting reading.

Eduard Shekhtman

Chapter 6

1959-1960

In January 1959 the capital of Georgia hosted the final of the 26th USSR Championship. It was distinguished by an exceptionally strong field of contestants. This was the result of the special conditions that had emerged in the Soviet chess organization. The point is that after many years of Botvinnik's hegemony, a period had begun in which – in the World Champion's own opinion – you could not name any one player who incontestably surpassed the rest. A further point is that the star of Mikhail Tal was already shining brightly in the chess firmament. The winner of the two preceding Soviet Championships and the Interzonal Tournament in Portoroz had given brilliant displays of attacking chess. Would Tal succeed in winning gold in the Championship of the Soviet Union for the third time running? The tournament in Tbilisi was to answer this question, which indeed became a leading theme of the exciting struggle.

Petrosian coped splendidly with the task that faced him. Once again he went through a tournament without a single loss, and this time he scored eight wins! In his new status as Champion of the USSR, looking back on the past year's work and the flood of emotions in his "little homeland", Petrosian gave a brief interview to a correspondent of the *Moscow Chess* magazine.

"It's a pleasant thing to be successful in my native city at the same time as upholding the sporting honour of Moscow. I spent my childhood in Tbilisi; my early chess years were passed here. The Muscovites as well as the Tbilisi fans were on my side. This gave me an edge over the other contestants.

"Over the past year I've done a lot of work on my chess style, I've been reconsidering my approach to the game. In the 26th Championship I tried to play more aggressively than in previous ones."

* * *

An assessment of his play published by the World Champion was encouraging and pleasant for Petrosian. In an article "On a Chessplayer's Style", published in the magazine *Ogonyok* ("The Firebrand") right after the Tbilisi tournament, Botvinnik wrote:

"Tigran Petrosian's style to some extent recalls that of Capablanca, Flohr and perhaps Smyslov. How is this to be explained, what do the styles of these players have in common? Chessplayers of this type make use of their chief strength which is their superiority in the understanding of the position. They accordingly strive to obtain positions where the time factor and the tactical element are not of crucial importance, where they can construct plans that are based on a solid foundation and lead to victory by stages of iron logic. With players in the Alekhine and Tal mould, on the

other hand, ‘everything’ resides in dynamics; the time factor and combinative vision are of decisive significance. I put ‘everything’ in inverted commas deliberately, since players of this second type cannot be successful without possessing good positional flair and technique, just as those of the first type cannot do without being astute and strong tacticians.

“Naturally if Petrosian were solely a specialist in the department of the positional struggle without being a resourceful tactician at the same time, he would not have been able to gain such a convincing victory in Tbilisi!”

GAME 46

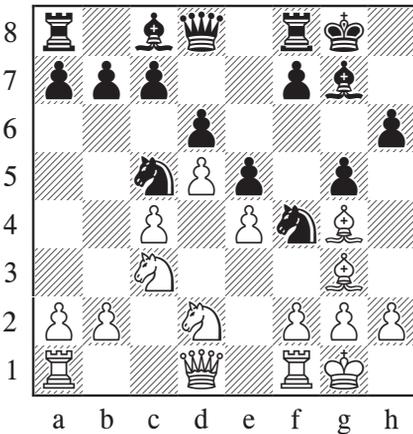
Tigran Petrosian – Jacob Yukhtman

Tbilisi 1959

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♙e2 0–0 6.♘f3 e5 7.d5 ♘a6

The knight can go to c5 not only from d7 but also from a6. This way it doesn't obstruct the c8-h3 diagonal for the queen's bishop.

8.♙g5 h6 9.♙h4 g5 10.♙g3 ♘h5 11.♘d2 ♘f4 12.0–0 ♘c5 13.♙g4



13...a5!:

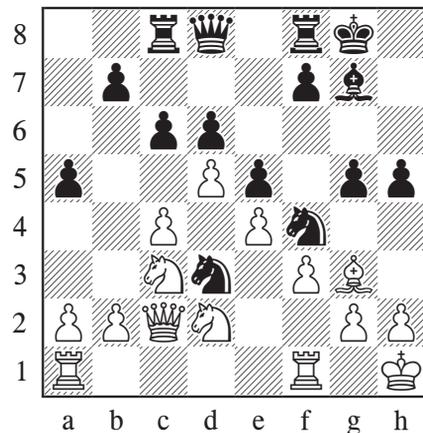
This move shows that Black is pinning all his hopes on the strong position of the knight on f4. Indeed the knight's position on that square appears unshakeable. If White exchanges on f4 with his bishop, it means granting a splendid diagonal to Black's bishop on g7 after the e5-pawn recaptures. Some time later it was found that instead of 13...a5 Black can play 13...♙xg4 14.♙xg4 h5! 15.♙f5 h4 16.♙xf4 exf4 17.♘f3 ♙f6! (the only way – not 17...f6?!, and not 17...♙f6 18.g3 with advantage to White) with possibilities of defence.

14.f3!

We can now trace the outline of White's subsequent actions. The bishop on g3 will move away, handing the square to the g-pawn. The knight on f4 will not be able to maintain itself, and without it Black cannot count on activity. For White, the plan is simple: he must try to bring a knight to e3, from where f5 is just one step away.

Examining the rest of this game, you will not see a white knight on f5. Don't be astonished. In practical chess, unrealized plans sometimes play a greater role than those that are enacted before your eyes.

14...♘cd3? 15.♙c2 c6 16.♙h1 h5 17.♙xc8 ♙xc8



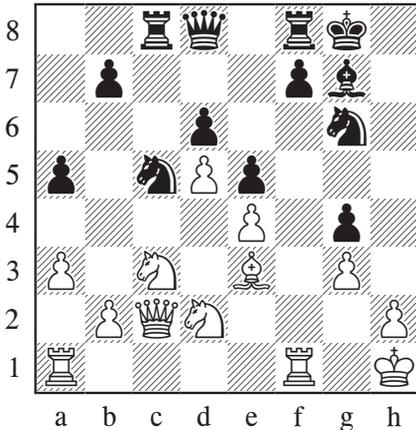
18.a3!

An unobtrusive but important move. White wants to exchange bishop for knight without letting Black recapture with his e-pawn. Right now, of course, 18.♙xf4 would be answered by the intermediate move 18...♘b4. Then after 19.♚b3 exf4 White wouldn't even have the modest satisfaction of snatching the b7-pawn, since 20.a3 ♘a6 21.♚xb7 would allow his queen to be trapped by 21...♘c5 22.♚a7 ♖a8.

18...cxd5 19.cxd5 ♘c5 20.♙f2 g4 21.g3 ♘g6

White would meet 21...♘fd3 with 22.♙xc5!. Incidentally the simple 22.♙e3 is also good.

22.fxg4 hxg4 23.♙e3



Black's position is lost, and few players in such a situation would be willing to wait around for some stroke of luck.

23...b5 24.♘xb5 ♚b6 25.a4!

White has an extra pawn as well as an overwhelming position. This means the curtain will soon come down.

25...♚a6 26.♘c4 f5 27.♖xf5 ♖xf5 28.exf5 ♚b7 29.♚g2 ♘b3 30.♘cxd6 ♚d7 31.♖f1

Black resigned. The reader should guard against any impression that the system

employed by White wins virtually by force. But for a long time no satisfactory antidote to it could be found.

1–0

GAME 47

Tigran Petrosian – Anatoly Lutikov

Tbilisi 1959

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 0–0 5.d4 d6 6.♙e2 e5 7.d5 ♘a6 8.♙g5 h6 9.♙h4 c5 10.♘d2 ♙d7

An inaccuracy; 10...♘c7 at once is better.

11.♘b5 ♙e8

The defects of 10...♙d7 make themselves felt already. The bishop has to withdraw to e8 because the straightforward 11...♙xb5 doesn't stand up to criticism from the positional viewpoint; after 12.cxb5 White acquires the crucial strategic square c4 for the use of his knight "in perpetuity". On the other hand after 11...♚e7 it would be hard for Black to rid himself of the pin on the h4-d8 diagonal and prepare the ...f7-f5 advance.

12.a3 ♚d7

Black makes this "awkward" move to escape from the pin. A better move appears to be 12...♘c7, after which White should continue with 13.♘c3 (there is no point in exchanging knights, as the black queen would land on the "natural" square c7), and if 13...a6 then 14.b4!.

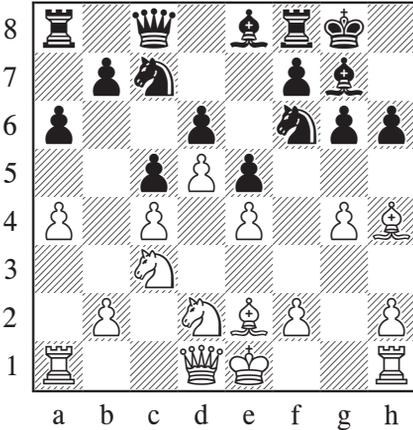
13.g4 ♘c7

But this time 13...♘h7 deserved preference, with the positional threat of ...♙g7-f6-g5. In reply, White intended 14.♙g3.

14.♘c3 a6 15.a4 ♚c8

Black could of course shut down the queenside with 15...a5, but White would still

have the possibility of taking the initiative on the kingside, while Black would be deprived of counterplay and effectively condemned to passive defence.



16.h3!

This modest-looking move is a difficult one to find, and deserves its exclamation mark. White intends to transfer his queen's knight to e3. But to carry out this manoeuvre he needs to free the square d1, and that in turn requires protection to be given to the g4-pawn. Moreover if Black subsequently plays ...f7-f5, then after exchanges on f5 White will have the move ♕g4 at his disposal. A strong alternative to 16.h3 was 16.g5, striving for a direct attack on the enemy king's position.

16...♖b8 17.♞c2 ♕d7 18.b3 b6 19.♗d1

White consistently pursues his plan without being afraid of Black's ...b6-b5.

19...b5 20.a5

A familiar device. White confines the black queen's knight, which has no suitable squares.

20...♝h8

A critical moment. Black could have played 20...bxc4 21.bxc4 ♖b4, which doesn't look bad on the face of it. But the white knight would

then alter its route: by playing 22.♗b2 and 23.♗d3 White could take the initiative on the queenside. With the knight on d3, another possibility would be opened up for him: preparation, after ♕g3, for f2-f4.

21.♕g3 ♗g8 22.♗e3 ♗e7

At this point it would have made more sense to go in for 22...bxc4 23.bxc4 ♖b4, although even then, after 24.♞c3 and 25.♗c2, the rook on b4 would be driven back.

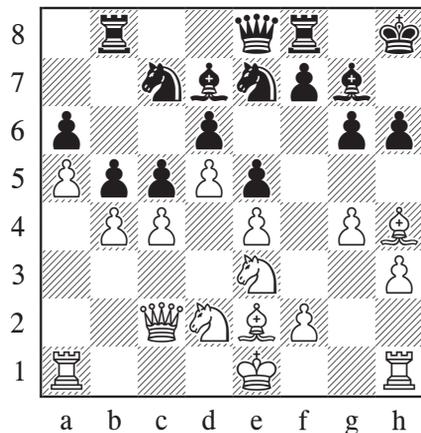
23.♕h4

An immediate 23.b4 looked tempting. However, this would be met by 23...f5! 24.bxc5 f4! 25.cxd6 fxe3 26.fxe3 (if 26.dxe7, then 26...exd2† 27.♞xd2 ♖f7, and White's seemingly formidable position is not as good as all that) 26...♗cxd5 27.exd5 ♗xd5, with unclear and complex play.

23...♞e8

Black evidently supposes that "all is quiet" on the battle front. Otherwise he would have returned his knight to g8. White then planned to continue with 24.0-0, and if 24...♕f6 then 25.♕xf6 ♗xf6 26.f4! (26.b4! is also good) 26...♞e8 27.f5 g5 28.b4!.

24.b4!



What is Black to do now? On 24...cxb4, play continues: 25.c5! ♖c8 (other moves are even worse, for instance 25...dxc5 26.♖xc5, or 25...♗c8 26.c6) 26.c6! (Better than 26.♗xe7 ♖xe7 27.c6 ♗e8, when breaching Black's position is not so easy for the moment. Similarly after 26.cxd6 ♗cxd5 27.dxe7 ♖xc2 28.exf8=♖† ♖xf8 29.♗xc2 ♗f4 – or even, in this line, 27...♗xe3 28.exf8=♖† ♖xf8 29.♖xc8 ♖xc8 30.fxe3 – the outcome of the struggle is still far from clear, as White has difficulty co-ordinating the actions of his pieces.) 26...♗xc6 27.dxc6 ♗xc6, and in the resulting position the three pawns are insufficient compensation for a piece.

Black therefore endeavours to cover the Achilles' heel of his position – the point d6.

24...♗c8 25.bxc5 dxc5 26.cxb5 ♗xb5

White would answer 26...♗xb5 simply with 27.♖xc5.

27.♗xb5 ♖xb5

Black would retain more practical chances of successful defence after 27...♗xb5.

28.0–0 f5 29.f3 ♖f7

It was essential to play 29...h5, trying to create some counterplay on the kingside at any cost.

30.♗dc4 ♖b4

After this move Black's position is hopeless, as White carries out the indispensable regrouping of his pieces with gain of tempo.

31.♗e1 ♖b7 32.♗c3 h5

This is now merely a desperate gesture.

33.gxf5 gxf5 34.exf5 e4

A last attempt to confuse the issue.

35.♗h2

Another possibility of course was 35.fxe4 ♗xc3 36.♖xc3† ♖g7† 37.♗h2 ♖xe4 38.f6, and White wins. But by this time “all roads lead to Rome.”

35...exf3 36.♖xf3 ♗d4 37.♖d3 ♗f6 38.♖g1 ♗h7 39.♗xf6 ♖xf6 40.♖c3 ♖f8 41.♖g6 ♖f7

Here the game was adjourned.

42.♖g5

Black resigned without resuming. On 42...♖h6, the continuation would be 43.♖g6 ♖f8 44.♗e5 with an easy win.

1–0

GAME 48

Tigran Petrosian – Nikolai Krogus

Tbilisi 1959

1.d4 ♗f6 2.♗f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.♗c3 d5 5.♗g5

Nikolai Krogus is a good connoisseur of theory. When playing him it is therefore psychologically correct to choose variations that have been less investigated. The move in the game, though not new, is employed comparatively rarely. That is why White selected it.

5...♗e4 6.cxd5

White can also keep a slight edge with 6.♗f4.

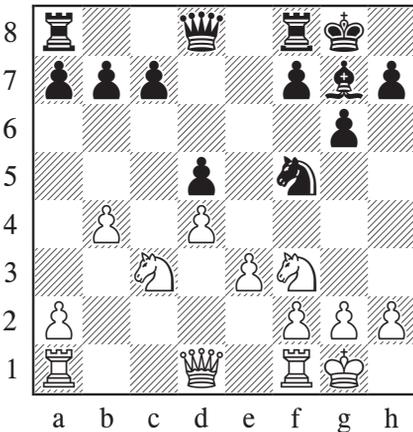
6...♗xg5

A more complicated game results from 6...♗xc3 7.bxc3 ♖xd5 8.e3. In that case the harmonious development of White's pieces and his pawn trio in the centre ensure him good prospects – as was demonstrated in Petrosian – Filip, Bucharest 1953.

7.♗xg5 e6 8.♗f3 exd5 9.e3 0–0 10.♗d3 ♗c6 11.0–0 ♗e7 12.b4 ♗f5?

Black's manoeuvre with ...♖c6-e7 is not bad in itself, but it turns out that he is associating it with the faulty idea of exchanging the light-squared bishops – after which White acquires a large positional plus by simple means. Black should have played 12...♙g4.

13. ♙xf5 ♖xf5



14. b5

It becomes clear that after 14.b5 and 15.♖b3 Black cannot do without playing ...c7-c6 sooner or later. But the “Carlsbad” pawn on c6 will then be a weakness in his camp, and he will constantly have to worry about it. The fact that his bishop on g7 is practically shut out of the game for a long time also plays a very important role.

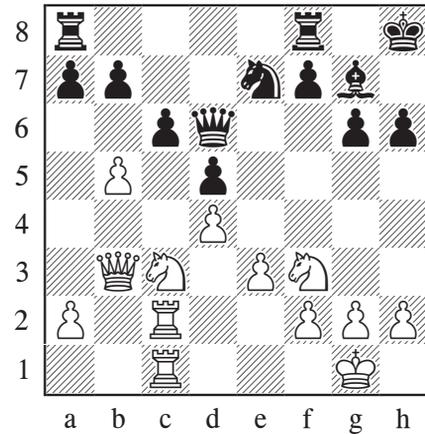
14...♖d6 15.♖b3 ♖e7 16.♖fc1 ♖h8?

The point of this move is hard to understand.

17. ♖c2 h6

It emerges that after Black's unnecessary king move to h8 he is virtually compelled to play 17...h6, as otherwise, after transferring his rook from f8 to the queenside (as he must), he would have to reckon with the unpleasant threat of e3-e4 and a subsequent ♖g5.

18. ♖a1 c6



19. ♖a4

White didn't want to exchange pawns at once, as after 19.bxc6 bxc6 20.♖a4 (or 20.♖e2) 20...♖b8 Black would obtain some counter-chances. White therefore strives to improve his position to the maximum, making a series of useful pawn moves to this end. Should Black exchange pawns himself on b5, a chronic weakness on d5 will be the result.

19...♖ab8 20.g3

White has no reason to hurry. A loophole for his king will be essential in any case.

20...♖h7 21. ♖c5 ♖fd8

White now wins a pawn by force. However, Black would also have a very difficult position after 21...b6 22.♖d3 cxb5 23.♖xb5 ♖fc8 24.♖xc8 ♖xc8 25.♖xc8 ♖xc8 26.♖f4 ♖e7 27.♖e8.

22.bxc6 bxc6 23.♖a4 ♖f6 24. ♖g2

Of course 24.♖e5 was also playable, picking up one of the pawns at once.

24...♖a8

It's a sorry state of affairs when you have to make moves like this, but there is no other way to defend the a-pawn.

25. ♖b7 ♖e8 26. ♖a5 g5

Finally recognizing that the c6-pawn is doomed, Black tries to work up at least *some* play on the kingside.

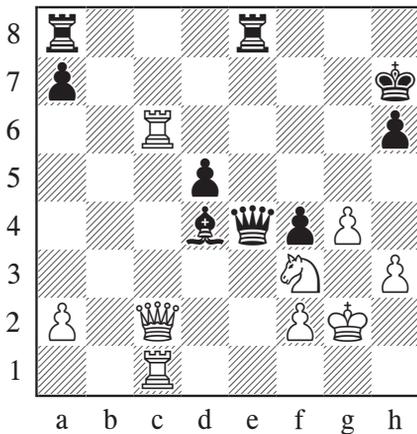
27.h3

There was no particular need for this move, but White wants to win in complete comfort.

27...♙f5 28.♘xc6 ♚e4 29.♖c5 f5 30.♙c2
♘xc6 31.♗xc6 f4

Black desperately exerts himself to create at least a semblance of counterplay, but White's pieces are superbly placed and he has nothing to fear.

32.exf4 gxf4 33.g4 ♙xd4



The bishop has come to life at last. Perhaps things aren't all that bad for Black? The next few moves prove that they *are*. The black pieces are thrown back, and White achieves a completely won position.

34.♙d2 ♙g7 35.♖e1 ♚a4 36.♙xd5 ♖xe1
37.♘xe1 ♖f8 38.♘f3

A triumph of centralization! Even the black queen has no move of any use.

38...♗h8 39.♖c7 a6 40.♙b7 ♖g8 41.♘h4

Black resigned.

1-0

GAME 75

Boris Spassky – Tigran Petrosian

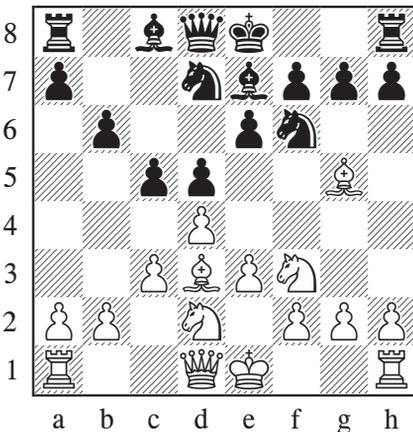
Moscow (7) 1966

In the process of a tournament struggle, when the play abounds in fine psychological nuances, the following stratagem is possible though not without its dangers. Play an opening that your opponent has thoroughly studied, in the hope that by fighting against his own weapon he will be struggling not only with real dangers but also partly with imaginary ones. Spassky adopted this approach against me a few times in the course of our World Championship matches. It was only natural that he should not neglect the variation we are going to see now.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗f3 e6 3.♕g5

Someone commented that this choice of variation was “inviting Petrosian to play in the yard of the house where he had grown up”.

3...d5 4.♘bd2 ♕e7 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♕d3 c5 7.c3 b6



Don't go looking for a contradiction between this move and what I recommended in the notes to Petrosian – Liublinsky (game 8). Black has no objection to a knight invading

on e5, on condition that he himself has not yet castled. On the other hand there is no better square for the queen's bishop than b7. So with a choice of two good moves, I decided to play the one that Spassky, probably, was not very much expecting.

8.0-0 ♕b7 9.♘e5 ♗xe5 10.dxe5 ♘d7 11.♕f4

White is following a familiar path. The pawn is transferred to e5, and the dark-squared bishop is retained for the coming fight. But there is one very big “but”. Black has not yet castled, and this, at bottom, denies White any prospects for using his e5-pawn as an active instrument. On the contrary, White's advanced post becomes an object of attack. However much the commentators might have raged afterwards, it would have been more sensible to steer the game into a placid channel by exchanging bishops on e7, following with f2-f4, and renouncing ambitious plans.

11...♖c7

A more resolute line was 11...g5 12.♕g3 h5, forcing 13.h3 – after which Black's position is highly attractive.

12.♗f3 h6!

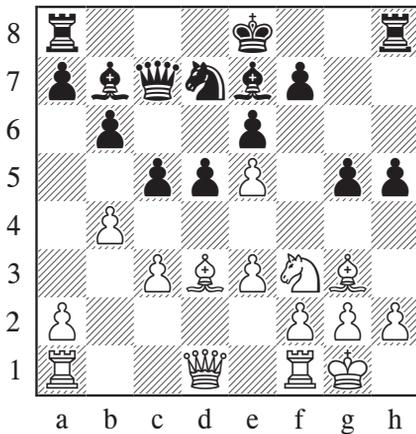
A reminder that the attack with the g- and h-pawns has not been removed from the agenda.

13.♕g3 g5! 14.b4!?

A good sign. By offering a pawn sacrifice, White is virtually admitting that he is already displeased with the course of the struggle, the character of the play. For Black, there is no sense in accepting the pawn sacrifice and handing the initiative to his opponent. After 14...cxb4 15.cxb4 ♕xb4 16.♘d4, Black's extra pawn would be unable to play a serious part for a long time to come, while White's attacking

chances – involving a queen sortie to g4 or h5, the occupation of the c-file by a rook, and a possible advance of the f-pawn – would be more than substantial. Of course if Black had no other, more active plan, then he could take the pawn and try to demonstrate that he had a perfectly defensible position.

14...h5



15.h4

Also after the natural 15.h3, White would be unable to hold on to his e5-pawn in view of the advance of Black's g-pawn, which would be inevitable sooner or later. Just now, Black is not tempted by the variation 15...g4 16.♘g5 ♜xe5 17.♙b5†.

15...gxh4 16.♙f4

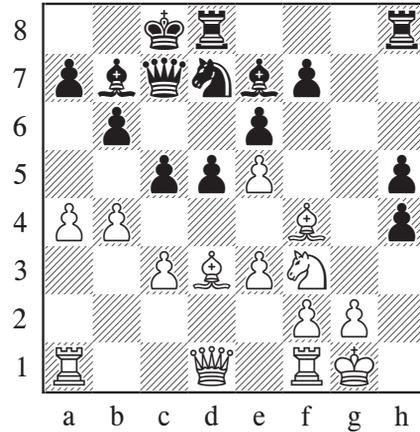
For the moment, White has secured the defence of the e5-pawn.

16...0–0–0!

A characteristic moment in the game. The players have extracted the maximum from the forces already developed, but the rooks are still out of play, and finding a place for them is the top priority. Viewed in this light, the fact that stands out is that by capturing on h4 Black has secured the g-file for a rook. Spassky appears not to have grasped this feature of the

position, as otherwise, for better or worse, he would have exchanged on c5, so as to open the b-file if Black recaptured with the pawn. On the other hand if a black *piece* appeared on c5, White could send his a-pawn into battle.

17.a4?



17...c4!

When the game was over, I discovered that this move had astonished those present. Indeed its drawback is obvious: the d4-square becomes the property of the white pieces. But only in name, I would add. White cannot derive any benefit from stationing his queen or, let us say, a rook on this square. What of the knight, a piece which is especially well placed on blockade squares of this type? In the present case the knight is denied the possibility of going to d4, as it is occupied first and foremost with defending the e5-pawn. Thus Black's hands are freed for operations in the g-file. Examining the way the game continues from here, we should not forget about one threat that is constantly in the air – the threat to bring Black's bishop to g7, winning what is not the pride but the weakness of White's position, his pawn on e5.

18.♙e2?

White had the excellent move 18.♔f5! available. If Black were to snap at the bait with 18...exf5 19.e6 ♔d6 20.♔xd6 ♚xd6 21.exd7† ♚xd7, he would emerge two pawns up – but that is when White *would* play 22.♘d4! and stand at any rate no worse. In that position the difference in strength between the bishop and knight would be great, and Black's pawn weaknesses would be irreparable. The most intriguing thing is that Spassky saw 18.♔f5 and demonstrated it immediately after the game was over. Nevertheless he decided against transferring his bishop to h3 (should Black decline to capture on f5). On h3 the bishop would be rather unaesthetically placed, resembling some odd kind of overgrown pawn. Yet it would be fulfilling an important function as the defender of the pawn on g2.

18...a6!

Properly speaking, this unobtrusive move contains the essence of Black's plan. Now no matter how White handles his a- and b-pawns, he will not be able to open lines on the queenside. This means that from now on the game will be played with “only one pair of goal-posts”.

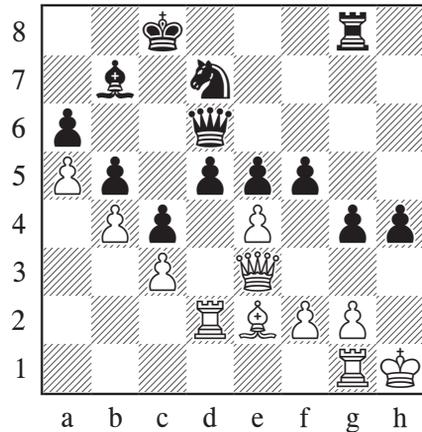
19.♘h1 ♔dg8 20.♚g1 ♚g4 21.♚d2 ♚hg8
22.a5 b5 23.♚ad1 ♔f8 24.♘h2 ♘xe5
25.♘g4 hxg4 26.e4

The idea of 26...dxe4 27.♔xe5 ♚xe5 28.♚d8# can hardly be called a trap – it is too obvious. White's last move can therefore be regarded as an attempt to open at least some file or other for a rook.

26...♔d6 27.♚e3 ♘d7 28.♔xd6 ♚xd6
29.♚d4

It looks as if some serious hopes have arisen for White – the g4-pawn is threatened.

29...e5 30.♚d2 f5!



31.exd5

Here 31.exf5 ♘f6 32.♚h6 was a shade better. But even so, with 32...♚d8 followed by 33...♚h8, Black would maintain a superb attacking position. We may note that the threat to push the d-pawn in conjunction with ...h4-h3 would be hanging over White like the sword of Damocles. Now at least the bishop on b7 is shut out.

31...f4 32.♚e4 ♘f6 33.♚f5† ♘b8 34.f3

A cute variation is 34.♚e6 ♚xe6 35.dxe6 ♘e4, threatening 36...♘xf2† and 37...g3#!

34...♔c8 35.♚b1 g3 36.♚e1 h3 37.♔f1 ♚h8
38.gxh3 ♔xh3 39.♘g1 ♔xf1 40.♘xf1 e4
41.♚d1 ♘g4 42.fxg4 f3 43.♚g2

Unhappy rook! It was no use to its own army, and now in despair it sacrifices itself without rescuing anything.

43...fxg2†

White resigned.

0–1